

Deuteronomy 21:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife;

Analysis

And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her (וְיָאִתְּ בְּשָׁבֵת אֲשֶׁת וְפָתַח-תָּאַר וְלִקְחַת בָּהּ)—The verb chashak (desire) is intense, appearing in Genesis 34:8 of Shechem's desire for Dinah and Psalm 91:14 of God's love for His people. The law acknowledges sexual desire without condemning it, but immediately regulates it to protect the vulnerable woman.

That thou wouldest have her to thy wife (וְלִקְחַת לְבָנָא אֲשֶׁה)—The phrase lakach le'ishah means full wife, not concubine or sex slave. The law requires marriage if the man acts on his desire, fundamentally different from treating war captives as sexual property. Protections follow in verses 12-14.

Historical Context

Comparison with other ancient Near Eastern law codes (Hittite, Assyrian) reveals none required marriage for captive women—they were considered spoils of war for sexual use. Deuteronomy elevates the woman to legal wife status, giving her protections unavailable to mere slaves or concubines.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does this law's requirement of marriage (permanent covenant) rather than temporary sexual use challenge modern casual approaches to sexuality?
2. In what ways does regulating desire rather than denying it reflect biblical realism about human nature and need for divine law?

Interlinear Text

וְכִאֵיתָ	בְּשָׁבֵר הַ	לְאִשָּׁה:	יִפְתַּח	תֵּאֵר	וְקִשְׁקִשָּׁת
And seest	among the captives	to thy wife	H3303	a beautiful	and hast a desire
H7200	H7633	H802	H8389		H2836

בְּ	לְקִשְׁקָשָׁת	לְ	לְאִשָּׁה:	לְבָ
H0	unto her that thou wouldest have her	H0	to thy wife	H802

| H3947 | | | | | |

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